

ty than with a more commonly shared need to subsist and thrive in a new economy.

As an ethnography, *After Love* gives a richly evidenced account of how Latin America's neoliberalization changes the very possibilities for economic and intimate relationships. Focusing on queer identities, Stout's work is a welcome addition to the scholarship on neoliberalism in the region as it is able to illustrate the complex interplay through which neoliberal subjects constitute themselves through the resistance, re-imagining and embracing new forms of economic transfers through 'love' relationships.

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– *Intimate Activism: The Struggle for Sexual Rights in Postrevolutionary Nicaragua*, by Cymene Howe. Duke University Press, 2013.

The last three decades have seen dramatic transformations in the politics of sexuality in Nicaragua. Based on ethnographic field research, *Intimate Activisms* offers an analysis of the role of sexual rights advocates as mediators in these transformations, by exploring their 'thick experience' as activists, the multiple discourses that inform their praxis, the way they negotiate their goals and strategies, and the configuration of sexual subjectivities in the intersection of global and local influences. After a historical overview of how the politics of sexuality in Nicaragua have been influenced by the legacy of US interventions, the Sandinista revolution, and the development of the feminist movement, the book focuses its attention on three key sites of activists' interventions: lesbian discussion groups, public events and mass-media interventions.

The author shows how activists engaged in the construction of particular forms of sexual subjectivity, for instance, through the presentation of lesbian and gay characters in the TV series 'Sexto Sentido' and through the 'intimate pedagogy' (p. 62) of the discussion groups that tried to create a space where participants could discover their identity as lesbians. In their interest to normalize and claim equal rights for same-sex sexualities, these interventions tended to favour 'egalitarian' lesbian and gay identities and relationships, which implied a gender-conforming self-presentation and homoerotic relationships without a gendered distinction between a masculine and a feminine partner. This contrasted with other forms of sexual subjectivities, like those of the *cochonas del campo* [country dykes] that the author met in a rural discussion group, women who understood themselves as masculine and active, and who established relationships with women they saw as feminine and passive. Activists' preference for 'egalitarian' forms of identity, however, responds to a 'very particular understanding of equality in terms consonant with liberal values' (p. 85) and to a narrative of progress that portrays those 'egalitarian identities' as global, modern and emancipated, while rendering invisible other forms of

subjectivity and relationship, or condemning them as self-delusional, backward, prejudiced and *machista*. Howe's sophisticated analysis raises important questions on the politics of identities in sexual rights activism, especially regarding the way these dynamics are experienced by those who do not conform to the liberal and middle-class ideals of 'egalitarian' relationships, such as the 'cochonas del campo'.

The book also examines different approaches to sexual rights activism, and how these differences are related to both national and transnational political influences. The organisers of the Sexuality Free From Prejudice events, on the one hand, framed 'sexual diversity and equality as broad social concerns' (p. 99), aiming to promote a cultural transformation in the larger Nicaraguan population, rather than focusing on a particular marginalized group. The Lesbian and Gay Pride events, on the other hand, addressed lesbian and gay rights more specifically, and posed a more open challenge to the anti-sodomy law and other forms of homophobia in Nicaragua. Through an exploration of the complex dynamics between and within these distinct approaches, the author illustrates how sexual rights advocacy in Nicaragua can be better understood as a struggle, as a 'a polymorphous set of practices' (p. 124), rather than as a movement, and shows how these different approaches 'are hybrid ways to articulate trans-local political values, placing them in conversation with local political logics' (p. 110). These multiple values and logics emerge from diverse intellectual forces that have influenced Nicaragua's shifting political landscape, from the liberal discourse on choice, identity, democracy and rights, to the Marxian legacy of the Sandinista revolution and its communitarian ethos.

Considerable attention is paid in the book to Nicaragua's anti-sodomy law, which was made more severe in 1992 (although it existed prior to that) and was overturned in 2007, paradoxically, during the same legislative process that imposed a complete ban on abortion. The role of the anti-sodomy law both as a catalyst and an obstacle for sexual rights activism is examined, as well as the multiplicity of factors that might have been involved in its repeal. Although this legislative change cannot be solely understood as a result of the work of sexual rights activists, the book offers evidence of how they 'were instrumental in helping to create the conditions that would lead to the overturning of the country's anti-sodomy law' (p. 162).

Sexual rights advocates have contributed to create the conditions for policy and cultural change, the book argues, by playing a key role as mediators between global and local politics of sexuality, articulating transnational discourses on human rights and lesbian and gay identities, with the national political history and sexual culture, in 'a circular exchange between public cultures and political spaces in both South and North' (p. 156). Important challenges still remain, as discussed in the conclusions, and both the old and the new generation of sexual rights activists still struggle to transform *la vida cotidiana* (daily life) in Nicaragua. *Intimate Activisms* will be an interesting read for researchers and graduate and undergraduate students working on same-sex sexualities, so-

cial movements and gender and sexual politics in Latin America, and its emphasis on lesbian identities and organizing is particularly welcome, since it is still a little explored area in those fields of study.

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– *The People's Poet: Life and Myth of Ismael Rivera, an Afro-Caribbean Icon*, by Rosa Elena Carrasquillo. Caribbean Studies Press, 2014.

In recent years the genre of the biography has become increasingly accepted as a probe to explore broader historical contexts, particularly those relating to colonial histories in need of revisionist scrutiny. This is what Rosa Elena Carrasquillo has done in *The People's Poet*, a biography on the life of Puerto Rican Latin singer Ismael Rivera.

In the book's introduction, Carrasquillo explains that she aims to combine 'the linear conception of time of a meta-narrative of a "post"-colonial subject with the revisionist, and even futuristic, need to create heroes of Caribbean popular culture' (p. 3). She argues that 'Puerto Ricans, like other black men and women of the transatlantic world, "need" heroes in order to humanize our past, present, and reimagine an empowered future' (p. 3) – and rightfully so. While the colonial project rested on the dehumanization of black people, it has become the main task of the postcolonial project to affirm their humanity. An important way to achieve this is through 'imagining, documenting, rationalizing and proclaiming' (p. 3) the exploits of black individuals who dared to resist colonial practices and discourses.

According to Carrasquillo, Rivera 'illustrates a type of hero of post-colonial times' (p. 4) as he exercised great influence in Puerto Rico's cultural domain, the domain where fierce battles over meaning and power were fought out, as political action on the island was limited due to the US governance system. Within this domain, Carrasquillo considers music as 'one of the most salient aspects of Puerto Rican cultural nationalism' (p. 6) and Rivera as 'a model of cultural nationalism and Pan-Africanism' (p. 8). The biography begins from these departure points.

Following the introduction, *The People's Poet* consists of five chapters in which Rivera's life story is unfolded. Chapter Two, 'Musical Cradle 1931-1954', describes his childhood in the poor slums of Santurce and shows how his dream of becoming a musician took off. Chapter Three, 'The Golden Years: 1954-1962', details Rivera's heyday from the mid-1950s to the early 1960s and explores the popularity of his 'new sound' (p. 45) among all racial groups in Puerto Rico and the wider Latin world at a time when racial separation was the norm. Chapter Four, 'Imprisoned 1962-1966', discusses Rivera's heroin addiction and his downfall when he got arrested for possession of the drug and sentenced to prison. Chapter Five, 'Salsa Heights 1966-1979', docu-